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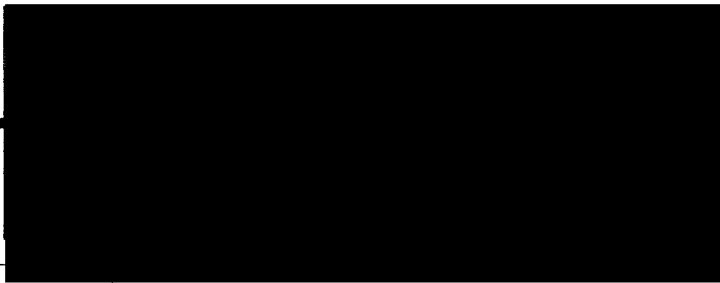
INDIA'S NEW ROLE IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT, By S.P. Seth. Pacific Community, April 1973. (S.P. Seth is a former senior research officer in the Indian Ministry of Defense.)

The attached article analyzes the extent of what the author terms Soviet "political penetration" in the Indian subcontinent. It shows how strongly entrenched the Soviet Union is in India and Bangla Desh, and how "political realities are likely to take Pakistan also in the same direction." He points out that future Soviet efforts in the region will be directed towards consolidating and expanding its relationships and further insulating the area from the politics of rival powers, mainly China.

He emphasizes, however, that the present extent of Indian dependence on the Soviet Union is not in accord with her own political aspirations as a potentially great power, and she is therefore seeking other means of broadening her relations with the major powers. He sees encouraging indications that not only is India tending to play down the theme of Indo-Soviet friendship, but also that the recent "aberration" in her relations with the United States is about ended and there are signs of improvement in relations between the two countries. He also points out that China will very likely recognize the "new political realities" in the subcontinent and will not push India further into the Soviet embrace.

The author discusses India's relations with Japan and concludes that if the likely pattern of "quadrilateral relationship" between Tokyo, Washington, Peking and Moscow emerges, India would have more opportunity to achieve its long-term objective of playing an independent political role in the international community.

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INDIA'S NEW ROLE IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

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By S. P. Seth

THE creation of an independent state of Bangla Desh was the first major demonstrative success of India's foreign and defence policies. It gave a much-needed morale booster to the waning pride in Indian nationalism and re-created a faith in India's envisioned role as a major political force in international politics. The euphoric upsurge thus created was in evidence everywhere. It was believed that India's new strength would compel the attention of all major powers to reconstruct their political relationship with the new rising star on Asia's horizon.

Despite an evident assertion of India's primacy in the South Asian context, international recognition of India's new stature has not yet materialised. A dialogue with the United States has not yet started while the Chinese hostility is unabated. Even in the sub-continental context, India has failed to stabilise her position, mainly because of the continuing difficulties with Pakistan. Even in Bangla Desh, India is emerging as the bogeyman of anti-Mujib forces, who attribute most of their infant state's problems to India's shadow. Admittedly, these political elements are too weak and disorganised but the fact remains that India is no longer immune to political innuendoes and smear campaigns in that country.

In the new configuration of international power politics, India has largely been ignored. However much India might have desired to reduce her present dependence on the U.S.S.R., the new pattern of international politics has so far not offered her wider options. Most Indians did not see it as a coincidence and were inclined to regard this as a well-synchronised Sino-U.S. power game. With Japan's wooing of China, India's discomfiture is even more unmitigated.

India's disappointment is further compounded because of the increasingly difficult economic situation at home and recent political disturbances resulting therefrom. The ruling party saw in all this an alliance of the ultra-left and -right—the internal manifestation of the external phenomenon of the Sino-U.S. axis. The nascent McCarthyism in reverse, witnessed a few months back, highlighted the mounting frustration of the ruling party to secure a legitimate acceptance of India's new role by the United States and China.

The internal and external compulsions of the Indian polity have drawn India into a still closer relationship with the Soviet Union. Despite occasional strains, Indo-Soviet relations have continued to develop in depth since 1955. A new dimension was added to this relationship with the signing of the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty in August 1971, and the political support extended to India by Russia during the height of the Bangla Desh crisis. The treaty seeks

to institutionalise the wide-ranging Indo-Soviet ties and provides for their further expansion.

The most significant aspect of Indo-Soviet relationship has been the widening economic cooperation between the two countries. In terms of trade exchanges, it has multiplied about 250 times from Rs13 million in 1953 to more than Rs3,000 million in 1971. And this is expected to reach about Rs4,100 million in 1973, as envisaged in a new trade protocol. This would represent an increase of 15 per cent over the anticipated trade level in 1972.

The Soviet Union has emerged as India's second biggest trading partner after the U.S. and, according to India's Foreign Trade Minister, it is the largest buyer of Indian goods. In an estimated trade turnover of more than Rs3,000 million, Russia is taking more than Rs2,000 million of Indian exports. In the overall global context, the share of the U.S.S.R. in India's foreign trade shot up from 2.2 per cent in 1956-57 to as much as 11.6 per cent in 1969-70; Indian imports and exports being 10.8 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively of her global turnover.

The trade pattern between the two countries has greatly diversified, particularly the pattern of Indian exports. The share of semi-manufactured and manufactured goods in India's exports now constitutes about 44 per cent of the total (expected to reach 60 per cent by 1975), and this has been accomplished without adversely hitting its traditional exports. Trade between the two countries has been greatly facilitated by the "Rupee Payments" agreement, under which all commercial and non-commercial payments are effected in Indian currency.

The growing trade ties with the U.S.S.R. have enabled India to import badly-needed machinery and other components for industrialisation without having to spend her scarce foreign exchange. This also has helped India to make up for the loss of shrinking Western markets. As for Russia, it has enabled her to create India's vital stakes in Soviet friendship and a market for such of her products which could not have a competitive international market. Because of India's dependence on Soviet and COMECON markets for certain exports, Russia also has gained commercially through comparatively cheap bargains. Admittedly, economic benefits for India are greater because Russia could have obtained the same products at competitive prices from other Asian countries. Therefore, the Soviet motivation in developing trade relations with India is largely political and no Indian government, of whatever political complexion, can afford to lightly risk deterioration in Indo-Soviet relations without a plausible trade alternative.

The Soviet contribution is not confined to the trade field. Though quantitatively the Soviet economic assistance to India has not been very large (Rs10,210 million worth of credits), its selective contribution to building an industrial infrastructure has been significant. To date 70 projects have been built or are being built with Soviet collaboration. These relate to the key sectors of iron and steel, heavy electrical products, machine tools, fertilisers, power stations, high-pressure equipment, coal mining, oil refining, etc.

The existing economic, technical and scientific exchanges are being further expanded in the context of the Indo-Soviet treaty. A joint inter-governmental commission on economic, scientific and technical cooperation has been recently created to bring about integrated and multi-dimensional economic and technical cooperation between the two countries. There is increasing talk in the Indian planning and economic circles of dovetailing Indian and Soviet economies, including the East European economies. There were even inspired reports that the U.S.S.R. would welcome India's association with the COMECON as a full member or an observer, though the Indian Prime Minister was quick to scotch the suggestion.

While the long-term programme of economic cooperation is being worked out, the Soviet Union has agreed to cooperate on an urgent basis to raise India's capacities in oil refining, power, fertiliser and steel, recently defined by India's Planning Minister as the core sectors of India's future planned development.

The expanding cooperation in the field of science and technology is exemplified in a recent agreement signed in Moscow. Its wide-ranging scope is implicit in an undertaking which prohibits either party from divulging information, obtained under the agreement, to a third party without the specific consent of the other. The visiting Indian Minister for Industrial Development, Science and Technology revealed that the agreement would cover Soviet collaboration in setting up a scientific information and documentation centre in India, and conducting joint research in laser, crystal growth and cybernetics, petrochemistry, ferrous metallurgy, oceanography, etc.

The expanding economic, technical and scientific cooperation between the two countries is the outgrowth of close political ties, now formalised in the Indo-Soviet treaty. In her foreign policy, India has received valuable Soviet support at critical times, whether it was on the question of Kashmir or, more recently, at the time of the Bangla Desh crisis. Russia has also been largely sympathetic to the general line of India's foreign policy based on non-alignment, because India tended to share Soviet opposition to the Western system of military alliances directed against Russia. As the Indo-Soviet political relationship evolved, it was also reflected in the common perception of Chinese threat, thus further reinforcing their friendship. Therefore, the Indo-Soviet relationship, as far as the foreign policy formulations of these two countries are concerned, was conceived on the basis of an identity of interests on a large variety of issues, and this identity continues to be reflected even today.

Lately, India's internal political compulsions also tended to bring these two countries closer. While fighting her political battles with the right-wing forces in the once united ruling Congress Party, Mrs. Gandhi had to lean heavily on the pro-Moscow left-wing elements within and without her party. In the election which returned Mrs. Gandhi with a massive majority, the political alliance with the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India (CPI) was main-

tained, though it is now increasingly coming under strain because of the political agitations recently engineered by this party to embarrass the ruling party. However, because of the difficult economic situation in the country where the government is exposed to a concerted political attack from both the left and right wings of the political spectrum, the ruling party is anxious not to alienate the CPI completely.

In the military field, India has been dependent on the Soviet Union for supplies of sophisticated equipment, including aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, submarines and heavy equipment for the ground forces. The U.S.S.R. is also helping India to manufacture within India some of these items, particularly the MIG-21 and its improved version MIG-21M. While it is difficult to quantify the Soviet military assistance, it would suffice to say that it is quite significant though not overwhelming. More relevant in this connection is the new orientation given by the Indo-Soviet treaty, which embodies a fairly identical strategic appreciation of the international situation, which is only possible between very close friends or allies. Though the treaty does not envisage joint military planning, it does provide for "mutual consultations" in case of a third party "attack or a threat thereof" and constricts either party's options to "enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party." Therefore, the treaty relationship between the two countries, with its military overtones, has qualitatively changed the content of Indo-Soviet friendship.

III

The Soviet policy in the subcontinent is not conceived solely in terms of relationship with India, though the latter naturally figures prominently in the Soviet calculations. As part of its policy to make secure vulnerable frontiers, particularly in the present context of Sino-Soviet hostility, Russia also has been anxious to stabilise the subcontinental polity and free it from the destabilising Chinese influence. To this end, Russia has never written off Pakistan which has been most vulnerable to Chinese influence and pressure. In fact, in 1968, Russia courted Pakistan intensely by agreeing to supply her with arms and equipment to India's great chagrin. It also has been assisting Pakistan in oil exploration and by providing economic and technical assistance in other spheres. A major agreement for economic cooperation was signed in September 1966, under which the U.S.S.R. undertook to render assistance in the construction of 21 major projects. More aid commitments followed after Kosygin's visit to Pakistan in 1968.

Even during the Bangla Desh crisis, Russia continued to advocate political reconciliation between East and West Pakistan and never really came out in support of an independent Bangla Desh until it became a political reality. Russia's opposition to Yahya's strong-arm methods was mainly because such methods engendered instability on her southern flank with a potential for conversion into a great-power political arena to her strategic detriment.

Despite its break-up, Pakistan still continues to be of great strategic importance to the Soviet Union. Its importance is not only

relevant in the context of Chinese machinations; it is also an important bridgehead between the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. In view of Russia's growing stakes in the Middle East, Pakistan's proximity to this region and her Islamic composition are important factors in Soviet strategic calculations. Again, Karachi is now linked to Russia by an overland route through Afghanistan (built by Russia), thus providing the Soviet Union an easy outlet into the Indian Ocean. Because of the recent Soviet support to India on the Bangla Desh question, it might be some time before Russia succeeds in cultivating the new political order in Pakistan. But strategic priorities do point to an active Soviet diplomatic thrust in that direction.

The Soviet Union also has some leverage in Pakistan's internal polity. The dominant political elements in Pakistan's two sensitive northern provinces (North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan) are known to have pro-Soviet political leanings. Even otherwise, Pakistan's new geopolitical realities point in the direction of an eventual closeness with Russia. Though China continues to be an important factor in Pakistan's foreign policy, it was, however, proved a paper tiger at the time of the Indo-Pakistan war, and its capacity to bale out Pakistan in future, politically or economically, is very limited. As against this, because of its leverage with India and within Pakistan's internal polity as well as its capacity to help Pakistan economically, the U.S.S.R. is more favourably situated. The recent Pakistani decisions to quit SEATO and accord recognition to the German Democratic Republic, North Viet Nam and North Korea were significant pointers in the context of Pakistan-Soviet relations, because China had never been too critical of Pakistan's pro-West policies.

IV

In her relations with Bangla Desh, Russia had a head-on start because of her sympathies with the political aspirations of the Bengalis. She also has capitalised on Peking's continuing hostility and America's initial tardiness in responding to the reality of the new state. The Russians have undertaken salvage operations at Chittagong Harbour. They also are undertaking a technical survey of the seabed as part of the salvage operations. According to some press reports, Russia has been unsuccessful in seeking base facilities at Chittagong and, to this end, would like to build a naval base around this port.

The Soviet ties with Bangla Desh are bound to expand further on the pattern of Indo-Soviet relationship. This will consist of offering selective economic assistance to build up an industrial infrastructure, trade relations based on barter exchanges tied to payments in local currency and training and equipment supplies to build Bangla Desh's armed forces.

As in the case of India, the Soviet Union enjoys some internal political leverage in Bangla Desh because of the recent close association between the ruling party and the pro-Soviet National Awami Party (NAP) led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed. Even

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though the pro-Soviet NAP is now treading an independent political course in view of the approaching elections, it has so far significantly kept out of the united opposition front being built by pro-Peking Maulana Bhashani against the ruling party.

The above analysis of Soviet political penetration in the subcontinent would seem to show that Russia is already strongly entrenched in India and Bangla Desh and the political realities are likely to take Pakistan also in the same direction. The future Soviet role in the subcontinent will be directed towards consolidating and expanding these ties and seeking to insulate this area from the power politics of her rivals.

V

The present situation in which India finds herself closely tied to the Soviet Union has largely been brought about by the lack of diplomatic options on her part. In the fifties, India's non-alignment brought her closer to Russia as a counterpoise to Pakistan's alliance with America. This situation was further reinforced in the sixties after the Sino-Indian war when promised American military assistance for India's defence build-up did not materialise. The Soviet Union willingly agreed to help build up India's defence structure. More recently, the emerging U.S.-China power equation showed a remarkable identity of power objectives in seeking to thwart the emergence of an independent Bangla Desh when the continuing crisis in the subcontinent posed a serious threat to the Indian economy and security. India was, therefore, left with no option but to secure Soviet political support and deterrence by entering into a treaty relationship with her.

However, such overt dependence on the Soviet Union does not square with India's own political aspirations as a potentially great power. Therefore, following Bangla Desh's liberation, India's official statements tended to play in a low key the theme of Indo-Soviet friendship and Indo-Soviet treaty as a model for other countries. At the same time, India's desire to establish normal relations with China and the United States was reiterated.

While China's hostility with India is an accepted fact, America's indifference has continued to annoy and exasperate Indians. Because of a shared political culture and values, Indian reaction to American indifference has had emotional overtones, reflected in the campaign, a short while ago, against the alleged CIA involvement in India's internal and external politics. While it is quite possible that the CIA became active in India after Bangla Desh's liberation, the strong governmental reaction seemed to suggest a search for a plausible scapegoat for India's continuing internal and external frustrations. India has been particularly sensitive to the alleged American attempts to undermine Indo-Bangla Desh friendship. It was argued that China and the U.S. (focus was more on the U.S.) were acting in concert, both internally and externally, to weaken India with a view to depriving her of the new political stature achieved with great sacrifices. The Sino-U.S. equation was, therefore, not only depriving India of alternative political options, but

also seemed to corrode India's internal body politic by raising the ghostly spectre of the omnipotent and omnipresent CIA.

This temporary aberration in Indo-U.S. relations seems to be petering out. There are indications that Indo-U.S. relations might, after all, take a positive turn. The exchange of messages between Mrs. Gandhi and President Nixon on the latter's re-election, seeking normal relations, was seen as a possible break-through. Subsequently, in a parliamentary statement on November 30, 1972, the Indian Foreign Minister reiterated India's desire to normalise relations with the U.S. Mr. Swaran Singh's positive assertion that "we have every reason to believe that they (U.S.) will encourage and support the new policy of bi-lateralism enshrined in the Simla Agreement" would seem to indicate that America is not averse to accepting the new political realities in the subcontinent with India's evident primacy. Later on December 2, Mr. Singh reportedly said that he expected a break-through in Indo-American relations. The American response to the Indian initiatives has been equally encouraging.

Besides these statements and exchange of messages, other indications also support the above hypothesis. The unofficial visit to India of Dr. Billy Graham, who is considered close to President Nixon, and his positive utterances on Indo-American relations are not entirely unrelated. The visit of Mr. Kewal Singh, India's Foreign Secretary-designate at that time, was also part of the same exploratory process. The appointment of Dr. Daniel Patrick Moynihan as U.S. Ambassador to India, after the post remaining vacant for a fairly long time, was another welcome step in the same direction. It is also considered significant that America has not resumed military aid to Pakistan. Earlier, America had agreed to the re-scheduling of Aid Consortium credits to India. Aid from the World Bank and its soft-lending associate, IDA, also has started flowing into India. Above all, America saw fit to recognise Bangla Desh which removed the potential cause of misunderstanding between India and the U.S. Though these indications have not yet been articulated into policy approaches, they are nevertheless significant steps to prepare for a meaningful dialogue between India and America.

A rational analysis of the new political realities, both global and subcontinental, also points in the same direction. Though India is suspiciously viewed in Washington as being too close to Russia, the possibility of its becoming a Soviet satellite is, however, discounted. At the height of the Bangla Desh crisis, Dr. Kissinger was reported to have remarked that Mrs. Gandhi was politically too cold-blooded to be anybody's satellite. Hence by offering her wider diplomatic options, Washington would make it possible for Mrs. Gandhi's government to establish a more equitable relationship with all the power centres.

In the subcontinental context, Pakistan has ceased to be a viable counterweight to India. Any further American encouragement to perpetuate confrontation between India and Pakistan will be counter-productive for Pakistan, more so because of her overpowering

internal contradictions. By encouraging stability in the subcontinent, America will be in a better position to neutralise Soviet penetration.

A revision of U.S. priorities in the subcontinent, coupled with China's own assessment of new political realities, is bound to result in a thaw and, possibly, *détente* in Sino-India relations. Though New Delhi discounts the possibility of an immediate break-through, the Indian Foreign Minister's invitation to China for direct talks on issues "which have bedevilled our relations in the past" is a significant overture. As a concrete initial step, Mr. Singh offered to consider exchange of ambassadors between the two countries. India also has been quick to dispel Chinese misgivings, recently articulated, about the possible existence of an *émigré* Tibetan government in India and the alleged Indian involvement in a rebellion there. India has once again unambiguously reiterated its acceptance of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

In the context of Bangla Desh, China has been saying that it is "not fundamentally opposed to the admission of Bangla Desh into the United Nations" and merely sought "the promotion of a reasonable settlement of issues between the parties concerned through consultations." It is also said that China has nothing against Bangla Desh Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Until Peking exercised a veto on Bangla Desh's entry into the UN, China had not opposed its admission into some of the important UN bodies. (It had even welcomed the Simla Agreement between India and Pakistan.) The hardening of the Chinese position on Bangla Desh, as reflected in the Chinese veto at the Security Council, was a political gesture to Mr. Bhutto and was exercised at Pakistan's request. So much is now admitted by Mr. Bhutto. It seems that China would not continue being the odd man out for a long time. This was implicitly admitted by the government-owned Pakistan daily *Morning News* which bluntly told such political elements in Pakistan who opposed Bangla Desh's recognition that Pakistan's friends, including China, could not wait indefinitely for recognising the near reality in the subcontinent.

It would, therefore, seem that China is unlikely to lag behind the U.S. much longer in recognising the new political realities in the subcontinent and will not like to push India further into the Soviet arms. It is, therefore, very likely that India would eventually succeed in establishing bi-lateral equations with both the U.S. and China. In that case, the Sino-U.S. power equation might not be operating to India's strategic detriment.

VI

Besides seeking alternative diplomatic options to broadbase her relations with major power centres, India now has the added responsibility of watching her delicate relationship with Bangla Desh and increasingly with Pakistan when their relations are normalised. Though Indo-Pakistan relations continue to be strained, this situation is unlikely to continue for long. Despite the halting movement, there is a perceptible improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations. An agreement on the delineation of the line of control in Kashmir has

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been signed, resulting in troop withdrawals and return of captured territories. There also has been an exchange of POWs captured on the western front and some civilian internees; moves are also afoot to resume overflight of civilian aircraft and communications. President Bhutto also has been preparing his people to accept the reality of Bangla Desh before according her recognition. Above all, Pakistan's internal and external political constraints do not leave her much choice except to seek normal relations with India and eventually with Bangla Desh.

When India has stabilised her relations with Pakistan and Bangla Desh, she would seek to insulate the subcontinent from the interplay of international power politics. This obviously would put constraints on Indian diplomacy because it presupposes: (i) an integrated approach on major foreign policy issues based on an identical perception, which might not always be forthcoming; (ii) a credible capacity to ensure their security and economic viability; (iii) willingness to accommodate them politically or otherwise on contentious issues (Kashmir is a point in illustration); and (iv) effectiveness to reconcile their mutually conflicting interests (as between Pakistan and Bangla Desh).

On all these counts, India is presently quite vulnerable. In addition, India will have to be careful not to let the "big brother" attitude send these countries looking for powerful allies. The Kashmir question will continue to be a persistent sore in India's relations with Pakistan unless a triangular settlement satisfying India, Pakistan and political elements within Kashmir can be worked out. In the case of Bangla Desh, the extreme left and right wings continue to be hostile and India is increasingly getting identified with sectional politics because of its closeness to the ruling party. Even otherwise, India is becoming the bogeyman of Bangla Desh's manifold problems, which are by no means small. Moreover, in her relations with other countries, India might often be required to temporise her political and economic interests for the sake of special ties with Pakistan and Bangla Desh. This will be particularly so in the economic field because of competitive exports of these countries (Pakistan's textiles and other manufactured and semi-manufactured products and Bangla Desh's jute exports are relevant in this connection). In the context of Pakistan-Bangla Desh relations, India is already handicapped because of the need to reconcile their conflicting positions on POWs and other issues.

India's hope to stabilise her primacy in the subcontinent, therefore, depends on her acceptance by the major powers, who should agree to treat the subcontinent as some sort of a neutral zone under Indian influence. In the restructured polity of the subcontinent, even though Bangla Desh and Pakistan will no longer be serious security threats to India, they might still be serious headaches and even a potential threat by proxy if they are susceptible to external political pressures.

VII

As if the present problems were not enough, Indian diplomacy is being called upon to reassess and reappraise Japan's likely role, in what promises to be a quadri-lateral power game in the Indian and Pacific Oceans' areas. There was quiet satisfaction in New Delhi when, initially, the Sino-U.S. *détente* seemed to be operating against Japanese national interests as well. In this context, the seventh consultative meeting of the Indian and Japanese Foreign Ministries' officials, held at New Delhi in March 1972, was considered highly significant. Commenting on this, the official Indian fortnightly "Indian and Foreign Review" said, "Japan has shown greater interest in fostering closer relations with India in matters concerning the two countries in the light of changing situation in Asia." The growing Sino-U.S. *détente*, with India and Japan left out, seemed to create natural conditions for more purposeful co-operation between Japan, India and the Soviet Union as a counter-weight to the emerging Sino-U.S. equation.

However, Premier Tanaka's diplomatic initiative to beat America at its own game by normalising relations with China seemed to have turned India's initial satisfaction into forebodings regarding the shape of international politics in this part of the world. That Japan has accomplished a break-through in her relations with China without apparently impairing her alliance with the U.S. naturally raises the spectre of a possible Sino-U.S.-Japanese axis, even though it seems premature and highly unlikely. The present Japanese policy of simultaneously seeking a peace treaty with the U.S.S.R. and working out development plans for exploiting Siberia's vast economic potential, would seem to indicate that Japan is more interested in developing bi-lateral equations with Peking, Washington and Moscow, and thus striking a more independent posture in a multi-polar world order.

Moreover, China's present responsiveness to Japanese overtures was largely the outcome of an available option for Japan to move closer to the U.S.S.R. It would, therefore, be simplistic to imagine that China has suddenly changed its strategic appreciation of Japan's resurgent and "expansionist" nationalism. It is at best a tactical compromise to contain the phenomenon of Japanese resurgence and "militarism" by a realignment of political forces—externally by reducing the Japanese propensity for the Soviet alternative and also through the use of America's security treaty with Japan as a curb on possible Japanese militarist revival and, internally, by solidifying such political elements within Japan's body politic who favour *détente* and *rapprochement* with China. In this context, it would be more relevant to say that the new Sino-U.S. equation is being intelligently used (with or without a formal understanding) to put a brake on Japan's potential role of overawing China as a major political factor in the Pacific. China's silence on Japan's Fourth Five-Year Defence Build-up Programme is also a tactical concession to discourage Japan from going nuclear, at least until China has firmly established her lead.

Though initially Sino-Japanese *rapprochement* was described by

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some in India as "a turning point in history" heralding a new era in Asia, this does not seem to be the prevalent view now. The entire thrust of Japanese polity, economic development and rearmament programmes points to the emergence of an awakened Japanese nationalism which would not, over a time, be satisfied with a pre-determined (by others) role for herself. And the exuberant and overtly confident Chinese nationalism, as symbolised in Maoist China, is unlikely to share with Japan a common and equal role in an area regarded by Peking as the Chinese sphere of influence.

The present phase of Japanese foreign policy, as reflected in their interaction with China, seems highly emotive in which the common cultural heritage and Japanese penance for their past misdeeds seem to have become a substitute for hard politics. One cannot help recalling similar Indian vision of a common Sino-Indian role in Asia and the resultant frustrations because of the divergent strategic perceptions of the two countries.

Even economic realities do not seem to point in the direction of a long-term partnership aimed at Asian hegemony. The entire thrust of Chinese economic philosophy is to create a self-reliant economy, for which Peking would be willing to harness Japanese technology and selective investments and credits. But this does not hold any prospect of bumper trade exchanges after China is largely industrialised. On the other hand, an industrialised China is likely to emerge as Japan's competitor in an arena of political competition between them.

Therefore, it seems a highly simplified proposition to imagine a Tokyo-Peking axis or, for that matter, a triangular axis including Washington. The Tokyo-Washington axis, as it exists today, has more areas of disagreement, actual and potential, than what unites them. Precisely because of this awareness, Washington seems hearkening back to Roosevelt's vision of grooming China for a major Pacific role as a counterpoise to Soviet and Japanese ambitions in the Pacific.

While India might feel perturbed over the future orientation of the triangular relationship between China, Japan and the U.S. because of the present state of strained relations with China and the U.S., it would seem unrealistic to imagine that this would develop into a political axis. The likely pattern would seem to be quadrilateral relationship between Tokyo, Washington, Peking and Moscow, and this might eventually give India greater elbow room to establish bilateral equations with all the major power centres.

VIII

A middle power like India, which has the ambition of striking a more independent political role in international polity, finds herself circumscribed by the fluidity of the subcontinental polity and international power politics. In the circumstances, India's present preoccupation in foreign policy is to stabilise her primacy in the subcontinent and to consolidate her ties with Nepal, Sri Lanka and Burma. Alongside this and, as part of her long-term policy, India seeks to establish bi-lateral equations with major power cen-

tres and thereby create their vested interests in respecting India's primacy in South Asia.

While the present is a difficult time, objective political realities seem to suggest that India's foreign policy objectives may not be far from realisation. With its complex problems of internal economic development, India is unlikely to emerge in the role of a major power for a long time to come and, sensibly enough, this is recognised by policy planners and politicians in New Delhi.